

**PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED STATEMENT WITH COMMITTEE SECRETARY**

## **Initiatives Since 2005**

Conversion of ALS from contractor to in house operation.

Resulted in savings in excess of \$100,000 /year.

All aspects now done from in-house personnel – employees living, working and paying taxes in state.

Agent satisfaction survey shows over 90% think the system is better

Warden Investigator positions filled and several major cases have already been made against large scale illegal hunting and fishing operations. Has allowed field wardens to be in the field doing their normal job. “Enough is Enough” effort.

Fort Peck Hatchery construction was completed in late 2005 and went into production in 2006 – producing FWP’s highest number of walleye fry and fingerlings ever.

Stepped up survey and inventory of big game species. Greater ability to assess game populations and adjust season structure accordingly.

Implemented fee increases for hunting and fishing licenses starting with 2006 license with minimal buyer resistance. Montana still has lowest prices of Western states.

Worked closely with USFWS and other partners to get a rule for delisting of grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem. Review of comments is now underway by Service; final rule be published by May, 2007. Implemented major DNA studies of grizzly bears in the NCDE to establish baseline populations in that ecosystem necessary to move forward with delisting there.

Continuing to push Service to delist wolves in Montana. Service has promised to publish a delisting rule from MT an ID by the end of January. Delisting will allow states full management authority over all wolves across the state. Full authority includes hunting and trapping. We are working on a bill draft to establish wolf licenses and offer auction/lottery for wolves and grizzlies.

Completed a sage grouse management plan and working with partners to implement that plan. Includes sagebrush initiative where landowners agree to conserve sagebrush habitat for 30 years. Pursuing CCAA authority for landowners cooperating in sagebrush conservation.

Completed a CCAA opportunity for landowners in the Bighole valley wishing to work to conserve arctic grayling habitat. Currently enrolling landowners.

Implemented a renewed bison hunt around Yellowstone National Park. 2005-2006 allowed for 50 hunters to harvest bison and that season occurred with only minor glitches. 2006-7 hunt currently underway. Also continuing cooperation with Nez Perce and CSKT in their exercising of treaty hunting rights.

Implemented the "super tag" program put for the by the PL/PW last session. First year (2006) brought in \$300K . All of those revenues are dedicated to the block management program – allowed more landowners to be enrolled and expansion of other block management agreements.

Added 12 new FAS's to the system. Also expanded some existing FAS.

Added approximately 4800 acres of fee title wildlife lands, 7800 acres of CE and 18,700 acres of leased lands. Working on several other projects. FWP spent over \$500,000 on weed control.

Participated with several other states in passage of the Reid bill in Congress that reaffirmed the state's authority to regulate hunting and fishing, including limiting NR participation and differential fees for NR. Cautionary note.

Continuing work to improve operations and management of FAS and Parks.

Under direction of the FWP Commission, implemented general big game hunting season structure to 5 week. This effort also included liberalization of seasons in may areas as well as new rules to allow management seasons and game damage hunts in areas where necessary.

Worked with over 30 different groups to complete the Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy required by the State Wildlife Grants Program. The plan identifies ways to keep common species common and avoid listings under the ESA. Strong habitat focus will provide direction to Habitat Montana, Upland Bird Enhancement Program and Future Fisheries.

Adopted Commercial Use Rules for FWP lands that will allow us to reduce conflicts and improve management of heavily used sites and rivers.